

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9673
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 10072

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, IS, US
SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH LABOR MK YAACOBI

1. CONVERSATION BETWEEN DCM AND LABOR MK GAD YAACOBI TODAY
YIELDED A NUMBER OF POINTS OF INTEREST. YAACOBI IS
FORMER MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, IS IN THE MOST INNER CIRCLE
OF THE LABOR LEADERSHIP AND, AT 42, STRIKES US AS BEING
A PREMATURE MEMBER OF THE OLDER GENERATION IN LABOR.
HIS VIEWS, WHICH HE WOULD DESCRIBE AS VERY MODERATE,
BISECT THE SPECTRUM OF LABOR OPINION AND HE IS, TO
BORROW HIS OWN PHRASE, "A MAN OF THE CONSENSUS."

2. IN SPITE OF (OR PERHAPS BECAUSE OF) ALL THIS, HE HAS
A LONG ASSOCIATION WITH AND A HIGH ADMIRATION OF DAYAN
WHOM HE DESCRIBES IN SOMEWHAT MORE POLITE AND TACTFUL
LANGUAGE AS A BIT OF A RASCAL, OPPORTUNISTIC, TRIMMING WITH
THE POLITICAL WIND, AND MORE INTERESTED IN SOLVING PROBLEMS
THAN UPHOLDING PRINCIPLES. DAYAN GETS ALONG WITH BEGIN (BY
CONTRAST A RIGID MAN OF DOCTRINE AND PRINCIPLE) BECAUSE DAYAN
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IS MORE OF A CIVIL SERVANT THAN A POLITICIAN, YAACOBI THINKS,
CAPABLE OF SERVING MASTERS WITH WHOM HE DISAGREES, WHILE TRY-
ING IN TACTFUL WAYS TO INFLUENCE THEM.

3. YAACOBI, AS A GOOD LABOR MAN, FORESEES THE ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN
NEGOTIATIONS AS REACHING A POINT WHERE BEGIN MAY BE CON-
FRONTED WITH A CHOICE BETWEEN COMPROMISE AND PRINCIPLE ON THE

WEST BANK AT WHICH TIME DAYAN WILL BE LEAST VOICE IN THE CABINET A COMPROMISE VIEW ON THE TERRITORIAL ISSUE, BUT LEAVE IT TO YADIN AND OTHERS TO CARRY ANY SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO BEGIN. HE THINKS BEGIN WILL BE UNABLE TO COMPROMISE, THAT HE AND HERUT WILL BE ISOLATED, AND THAT LABOR HAS A CHANCE OF RIDING BACK IN THROUGH COALITION WITH THE MORE DOVISH FACTIONS OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT.

4. ACCORDING TO YAACOBBI, THERE IS AN INNER GROUP OF LABOR WHICH MEETS SECRETLY EACH SUNDAY NIGHT (EVEN OTHER KNESSET LABOR MEMBERS DO NOT KNOW OF ITS ACTIVITIES) TO DISCUSS FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY. IT INCLUDES PERES, ALLON, RABIN, GOLDA MEIR, NAVON, RABINOWITZ, EBAN, SHAKED, HILLEL AND, BY FAR THE YOUNGEST OF THE GROUP, YAACOBBI HIMSELF. IN ITS MOST RECENT MEETING THE GROUP DISCUSSED THE WEST BANK ISSUE, WITH THE MAJORITY ENDORSING THE IDEA OF LIMITED TERRITORIAL CONCESSION TO HUSSEIN IN RETURN FOR PEACE, PLUS A FURTHER SUBSTANTIAL TERRITORIAL CONCESSION IF FUNCTIONAL SETTLEMENT WERE THE BASIS. THE AMOUNT OF THE LATTER CONCESSION WOULD DEPEND ON THE CHARACTER OF THE FUNCTIONAL ARRANGEMENT, PRIMARILY ISRAELI SETTLEMENT RIGHTS AND PRESENCE OF ISRAELI TROOPS IN SPECIFIED AREAS WITH EFFECTIVE MILITARY CONTROL OF THE JORDAN BORDER. GOLDA MEIR OPPOSED (SHE WANTS CLEAR, FINAL BORDERS, WITH NO FUNCTIONS OR PHASES TO CONFUSE THE ISSUE, AND VERY LIMITED CONCESSIONS); RABIN TAKES A Milder VERSION OF GOLDA'S POSITION; RABINOWITZ WOULD RETURN "ALL" THE WEST BANK; AND ALLON STICKS CONFIDENTIAL

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WITH THE ALLON PLAN. YAACOBBI APPEARS TO REGARD THE MAJORITY VIEW AS THE ULTIMATE IN ISRELI DOVISHNESS, WITHIN PRACTICAL POLITICAL LIMITS; ONE THAT WOULD COMMAND MAJORITY SUPPORT IN ISRAEL IF SADAT AND HUSSEIN WERE TRULY MODERATE IN THEIR DEMANDS; AND AN EMINENTLY FAIR COMPROMISE THAT THE ARABS SHOULD ACCEPT. HE WOULD ALSO REGARD A SINAI COMPROMISE FOR REAL PEACE WITH SADAT AS ONE THAT RETAINED ISRAELI CONTROL OF SHARM, THE RAFAH APPROACHES, AND THE MILITARY INSTALLATIONS IN EASTERN SINAI.

5. IN ADDITION TO THIS STRATEGY GROUP ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY, TOO SENSITIVE FOR ANY OUTSIDE PARTICIPATION OR EVEN CONSULTATION, THERE ARE A NUMBER OF OFFICIAL LABOR PARTY THINK TANK GROUPS ON DOMESTIC POLICY AREAS WHICH INCLUDE NOT ONLY MKS BUT EXPERTS AND PARTY LEADERS FROM OUTSIDE THE KNESSET. THESE ROUGHLY CONFORM IN SUBJECT MATTER TO THE CABINET DEPARTMENTS, AND MAKE A SIGNIFICANT INPUT TO THE POLICY POSITIONS OF THE LABOR KNESSET DELEGATION.

6. BEGIN MEETS PERIODICALLY WITH PERES FOR DISCUSSION INCLUDING THE ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUE, BUT ACCORDING TO YAACOBBI THE GOVERNMENT MAKES NO FURTHER, INSTITUTIONAL EFFORT TO CONSULT, BRIEF OR

DEVELOP ANY SUPPORT FROM THE OPPOSITION, EVEN ON SECURITY/
PEACE ISSUES.

7. JUDGING BY HIS REMARKS TODAY YAACOBI, AND PERHAPS A NUMBER
OF OTHERS LIKE HIM IN LABOR, HAS HAD HIS HOPES CONSIDERABLY
RAISED, BUT HIS THINKING LITTLE CHANGED BY THE SADAT VISIT. THE
MAJORITY LABOR POSITION HE PORTRAYS IS PRETTY HARD TO DISTINGUISH
FROM LONG-STANDING LABOR VIEWS. YET HE IS CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC
THAT SADAT AND, PERHAPS HUSSEIN, MAY BE REALLY APPROACHING
THE POINT OF ACCEPTING SUCH A SOLUTION. HE DOES NOT EXPECT
ANY SERIOUS NEGOTIATION WITH ASSAD AT THIS POINT, IS QUITE READY
FOR A SEPARATE SETTLEMENT WITH SADAT IMMEDIATELY, LEAVING
EVEN HUSSEIN AND THE WEST BANK FOR LATER NEGOTIATION IF
NECESSARY. FROM HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE ARABS, IT WOULD HAVE
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BEEN A MISTAKE TO MAKE ANY CONCESSIONS TO SADAT PRIOR TO SPECIFIC
NEGOTIATIONS AND HE THINKS SADAT DID NOT EXPECT IT.

8. YAACOBI SOUNDS AND LOOKS LIKE THE CLASSIC MAN OF THE MIDDLE,
WHOSE AVAILABILITY AND CREDENTIALS WILL BE IMPECCABLE IF AND WHEN
LABOR COMES BACK WITH MUCH THE SAME LEADERSHIP AND ATTITUDES
AS IT NOW HAS. ONE IS LEFT WITH THE IMPRESSION HE IS PRETTY
CONTENT TO BE WHAT HE IS IN HIS OWN EYES, A MODERATE, REASONABLE
AND CAUTIOUS "MAN OF THE CONSENSUS," ATTRACTIVE, INTELLIGENT,
AND ARTICULATE. BASED ON TODAY'S CONVERSATION IT IS DIFFICULT
TO AVOID THE IMPRESSION HE SEES THE SADAT VISIT PRIMARILY IN
TERMS OF ITS VALUE IN VINDICATING LABOR'S POSITION AND STRENG-
THENING ITS FUTURE PROSPECTS.
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